

Department Speeds Efforts To Aid Evacuated Personnel

The Department has launched a continuing effort to alleviate the lot of its personnel and other Americans evacuated from the uneasy Middle East. (See NEWS LETTER, June.)

A focal point of Departmental activity in the aftermath of the six-day war in the Middle East has been the Employee Services Center.

As the NEWS LETTER went to press, a check showed that the Center had sent approximately 400 telegrams to relatives in the United States of about 700 personnel evacuated from the stricken area.

The wires sent by the Center spelled out for anxious relatives in the U.S. details of the safe arrival of their kinfolk in various safe-haven points throughout Europe.

In turn, the Center has received innumerable letters and calls expressing gratitude for the Department's concern for the welfare of its employees.

Because of the great number of claims by personnel, Idar Rimestad, Deputy Under Secretary for Administration, named Howard P. Mace the Coordinator of Claims.

Mr. Mace has his hands full. Not only is he coordinating the processing of personal claims for clothing and household effects. He is handling such official Government claims as those involving buildings, furniture, automobiles, trucks, equipment, and supplies. And he is also helping process non-Government claims.

The State Department Federal Credit Union is "bending over backwards" to help returning employees.

The Recreation Association is trying to keep a certain number of its apartments unbooked for the use of evacuees returning to Washington.

The Foreign Service Lounge, always helpful over the years, is "geared up" to give all possible assistance to returning employees and their dependents.

In mid-June, a telegram went to the field explaining how an evacuee can obtain an advance payment of up to 75 percent of a payable claim, with no lost time.

Such a claim could cover furniture, clothing or an automobile.

The telegram contained this word of caution:

"Claim must include signed repayment agreement; if property recovered or other reimbursement received; and must state claimant's understanding that any advance payment made will be refunded or deducted as may be required to conform with final settlement of claim."

A special air freight allowance has been established for evacuees proceeding to new assignments. It works this way: A person evacuated from Cairo, say, to Athens, and ordered to proceed to New Delhi for duty could have personal effects, such as new clothing, airshipped to him from the United States.

The Department, in mapping its evacuation plans, consulted frequently with the American Foreign Service Association.

In a statement expressing the Association's concern for prompt and equitable action for Foreign Service families, David H. McKillop, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Association, noted the Department's efforts to respond rapidly, and cited favorably several of the expedited procedures, including special arrangements for the advance payment of claims to avoid unnecessary hardship.

Mr. McKillop also stressed the importance of maintaining the current high level of interest in hardship and other personnel problems so as to insure that all claims and other matters resulting from the emergency will be handled promptly and with full consideration for the needs of the Foreign Service personnel involved.

Meanwhile, major banks in the Washington area have indicated they will honor overdrafts on a temporary basis in the accounts of Department personnel caught up in the Middle East turmoil and whose paychecks could be delayed in reaching banks here.



FIRST CLAIM—Betty Severson, a Foreign Service secretary, receives the first expedited claim-check under a program prompted by the Arab-Israeli war. Her effects had been shipped to Cairo. Their disposition is now "unknown." Making the presentation is Robert E. Peck, Deputy Director, Office of Operations. At the left is Howard P. Mace, Coordinator, Middle East Claims. By July 1, nine such expedited payments had been made for lost effects, totalling about \$9,000.